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NOTE

Accuracy in reporting types

I have recently made a card file for several hundred new holotypes described by about twenty authors during the past few years. The cards record the references to the original descriptions and the data on the holotypes. Comparing data on the pin labels with the data reported in the original descriptions reveals discrepancies in about three per cent of the cases, not just free interpretations of pin label data but actual disagreements. When data on the holotypes and those in the publications do not agree there is a question whether the specimen labeled holotype is the correct one. Did the author make a careless mistake in copying the data, or did he label the wrong specimen

as holotype? If some paratype bears the data reported for the holotype and the specimen labeled holotype does not, is that paratype the true type? When the labeled holotype has data different from the data published, some later investigator could correctly (or incorrectly?) conclude that the true type is lost.

This note is to show the need for care when reporting data on types. A common mistake is to report an incorrect date of collection.

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